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OAKHAMPTON CASTLE.

OAKHAMPTON is the name of a deanery in Devonshire, as well as of a town and a castle situated in it. The deanery contains, besides the town, three small villages or hamlets, named Chissacot, Meldon, and Kigbear.

The town of Oakhampton is surrounded on every side by hills, and derives its chief importance from being in the high road from Exeter to Cornwall: it is situated at about twenty-two miles from Exeter and two hundred from London. The neighbouring forest of Dartmoor affords pasturage to numerous flocks of sheep, the flesh of which is said, from the sweetness of the herbage, to be of superior quality; in consequence of which, great numbers of the sheep are sent to the London market. There is a weekly market at Oakhampton on Saturdays, at which corn, meat, poultry, fish, &c., are abundantly supplied. Oakhampton was one of the first towns that sent members to parliament. It acquired that privilege in the reign of Edward the First: the privilege was exerted in the seventh of Edward the Second: but from that period it appears to have remained in abeyance till 1640, when it was again resumed, and continued until the time of the Reform Bill. The right of election was vested in the freemen and proprietors of freeholds within the borough, about two hundred in number: Oakhampton was, however, one of the boroughs disfranchised by the Reform Act. Before the changes in municipal government, Oakhampton was governed by a mayor, recorder, justice, five principal burgesses, and eight assistants, aided by a town clerk and other officers. The mayor was chosen, on the first Monday after Michaelmas day, by the entire body, from two principal burgesses nominated by the late mayor. The principal burgesses were eight in number; the mayor, the late mayor, and the town clerk included. The freedom was acquired by birth and servitude; the eldest son alone becoming free at his father's death, though not unless born within the borough. But certain changes were made in these matters, by the Municipal Corporations Reform Act.

The living of Oakhampton is a vicarage, in the archdeaconry of Totness, and diocese of Exeter, rated in the king's books at 20*l.*, and in the patronage of the lord of the manor. The church is situated about half a mile from the town: it is an ancient edifice, with a handsome square tower, surmounted with pinnacles, and having north and south porches. There is, besides this, a little chapel called St. James's chapel, belonging to the corporation, and chiefly employed for the performance of divine service during the sessions, and occasionally in Lent.

Oakhampton derives an historical importance from

the circumstance of its having been the head of the Earldom of Devon, and the seat of the hereditary county sheriffs, keepers of the castle of Exeter. The castle, the ruins of which are represented in our frontispiece, was existing longer ago than we have any records of the town. William the Conqueror gave the barony to one of his faithful followers, Baldwin de Brionüs, who had greatly aided him at the battle of Hastings; and it is stated by some writers that Baldwin then built Oakhampton castle on his newly acquired estate; while others think that it existed before the arrival of William in England. Be this as it may, the castle became the residence of Baldwin, and he was created hereditary sheriff or viscount of Denshire or Devonshire, and baron of Oakhampton. Baldwin and his descendants exercised great power in the barony. They had the right of capital punishment over eight manors; and besides these eight, they held a great many others in demesne, upwards of a hundred and sixty being occupied at one time by inferior tenants. The barons acted as stewards at the installation of the bishops of the diocese, claiming on such occasions perquisites to a large amount. They possessed also numerous advowsons, and were the patrons of several priories; holding three fees of the see of Exeter, and ninety-two by knight's service. Edward the Third, by a stretch of power, created Hugh Courtney earl of Devonshire, and the barony passed into that family, in whose possession it remained till the reign of Edward the Fourth, when the earl of Devon was beheaded for taking part with the Lancasterian party against the Yorkists. After this it passed through various hands till the reign of Henry the Seventh, when it was restored to the Courtney family; but one of the branch having been accused of carrying on a treasonable correspondence against the crown, the park of Oakhampton was laid waste, and the castle reduced to ruin. The barony became extinct during the reign of Queen Mary, by the death of Edward Courtney, earl of Devon, without issue, when the possessions were divided among the descendants of the four sisters of his great-grandfather; by which division, Oakhampton castle, with about half the manor, became the property of the family of the Mohuns. During the last century, the entire manor became the property of Lord Clive, celebrated for his connexion with India. It was afterwards possessed by the Prince of Wales; and has since passed into private hands.

The ruins of the castle occupy the summit and declivity of a conoidal mount or eminence, now so thickly clothed with trees, that although the ruins are of great extent, only a very small proportion of them are visible from the high road. The high road from Exeter to Launceston is nearly on a level with the top of the mount, and the mount is skirted on one side by the western branch of the river Ock. In approaching from the south, the mouldering and ivy covered ruins present a peculiarly picturesque appearance, from their combination with the surrounding well wooded scenery. The ivy with which the lower part of the ruins is covered gives all that peculiar beauty which an old building, thus enveloped, is calculated to possess. In allusion to the effect of the ivy on these ruins, Mr. Williams, in his *Picturesque Excursions in Devon*, observes:—

The ornaments of nature, in the decorations of ruins, are so tasteful, so pleasingly wild, and so harmonized, that nothing from human ingenuity can be added for their improvement. "The long grass that o'ertops the mouldering wall" is an object simple and common; but where is there more effect produced, than when it is agitated by the wind, and responsively vibrating to its motion? The individual and general beauty of mosses, and the richness of lichens, contribute, by the great variety of their colour, to adorn the front of old buildings. All that remains for taste to perform is the removal of ivy when it shades fretted and tracery windows, arched doors, or any neat stone work: these are in general so few, and occupy so small a part of the walls, that, however common in point of architectural beauty they may be, yet, by their exposure, a variety arises, a break is introduced, and something like an object is added. To these productions of the vegetable world, the landscape painter is under the greatest obligation. In a picture of a castle, or of any ruin, where it might be necessary to adhere to the local scene, without the introduction of any object to assist in the character of it as a picture, their judicious management would enable him to give it either the appearance of being agitated by a storm, or a peculiar interest from the ivied foliage, with its clustered branches, and the delicacy of the overhanging long grass.

Between Oakhampton and Tavistock is situated Brent Tor, a remarkable elevation, which, although distant twenty miles from Plymouth, is the first Devonshire landmark seen from the British Channel, and forms a useful guide to mariners on entering Plymouth Sound. Some writers, judging from the conical shape of the hill, and the porosity of the rock of which it is composed, conclude that it is an extinct volcano. There is at the very summit of the Tor a church, of the very small dimensions of 37 feet by 14, which can be seen far out at sea. The erection of such a building on so exposed and elevated a spot is traditionally accounted for thus:—A merchant in one of our colonies, wishing to return with his wealth to his native country, embarked full of those hopes which men, in whose bosom the *amor patriæ* is not extinguished, so fondly indulge. The vessel, wafted by light breezes, pursued her course for some days without interruption; but on one particular evening symptoms of a change appeared, and by break of day the ship was in imminent danger; for the tempest increased to such a degree as to excite the most alarming apprehensions. The agonized merchant, in the fervency of prayer, vowed that should Providence spare him from the storm, he would build a church on the first land he saw. The vessel fortunately rode out the tempest, and Brent Tor presenting itself first, on their approach to the western coast of the island, he piously fulfilled his vow, by building a church on the summit of the Tor, to remain as a memorial of his gratitude and sincerity. Whether this tradition be true or not, it is certain that a few persons still attend divine service in the church, if they have strength and vigour enough to mount. Carrington in his poem of *Dartmoor* speaks of this hill and the chapel upon it, in the following beautiful lines:—

From yon plain
Brent Tor uprushes. Even now when all
Is light, and life, and joy, on Tamar's bank,—
E'en now that solitary mass is dark,—
Dark in the glorious sunshine. But when night
With raven wings broods o'er it, and the storm
Of winter sweeps the moor, such sounds are heard
Around the lonely rock, as village seers
Almost unearthly deem. In truth it wears
A joyless aspect; yet the very brow
Uplifts a chapel, and devotion breathes,
Oft, in the region of the cloud, her hymn
Of touching melody. Impressive spot
For fair religion's dome! and sure, if aught
Can prompt to holiest feeling, and give wing
To disembodied thought, it is to bend
The knee where erst the daring eagle perch'd;
And while, with all it's grossness and its care,
Earth waits, far, far below, to worship there,—
There on the wild van of the wildest rock
That Dartmoor lifts on high.

At a short distance from Oakhampton is situated Oaklands, an elegant seat of Albany Saville Esq., lord of the manor of Oakhampton, and owner of the

castle. Oaklands is a mansion of the Ionic order, built upon a woody slope, about twenty years ago. The house has a finely proportioned portico in front; and its internal arrangements are elegant and judicious. The staircase is grand and spacious, and is surrounded by an elegant gallery, supported by Corinthian columns.

THE CRETAN AND THE SNAKE.

A FABLE.

WHO has not heard of ancient Crete,
Renowned for treachery and deceit*;
For recreant hearts, that loved to frame
Reports to blast a neighbour's fame;
For tongues that spread with foul delight
The sweltering venom of their spite,
Resembling, in Detraction's plan,
The old arch-enemy of man†?
Well might the great Apostle's word
The history of their crime record,
Charge on their holy Prelate's care,
This wholesome precept to declare,—
"Speak ill of no man‡", and impart
Such heavenly lessons to the heart,
As, under God, might bring the young
To heed their thoughts, and curb the tongue.

A CRETAN, to his title true,
A slanderer, and a foul one too,
Who loved to point the bitter jest,
And plant a thorn in virtue's breast;
Whose tongue (that small but powerful part,
The organ of a wicked heart,)
Was used to forge and utter words,
Which cut the soul like very swords,
His lazy noon-tide length had laid,
Beneath a crumbling ruin's shade,
Where ivy, with insidious force,
Helped, while it hid, destruction's course,—
Fit emblem of the slanderer's wiles,
Who veils his malice under smiles.

I warn thee, Cretan, have a care,
For folded 'midst the dry dust there,
A poisonous SNAKE, in cunning guise,
With burnished coat, and shrunken eyes,
Replete with sly and dull despite,
E'en now hath marked thee for a bite!

The blow is struck! and through the wound
Th' injected virus flows around.

But Cretans' flesh was dangerous food;
For strange! O, strange! his evil blood,
Black as the source from whence it sprang,
Too subtle for the serpent's fang,
Poured poison back, like living flame,
Which filled and shook the reptile's frame;
Till, with a deadlier venom tried,
The serpent sickened, writhed, and died. M.

* See Titus i. 12, in which St. Paul quotes a verse of Epimenides, respecting the character of the Cretans.

† The word Διάβολος (Diabolus) from which our word, Devil, is derived, means "A Calumniator."

‡ See St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, the first Bishop of Crete, iii. 2.

*** The above Fable is founded on a Greek Epigram in two lines, in which the story is told of a Cappadocian; but as the Cretans, Cappadocians, and Cilicians were proverbially classed together as of a kindred disposition, (the three Kappas in Greek,—the three C's in our language,) it is, perhaps, not unfair to assign the incident respecting the Snake to a Cretan.

GARDEN HERBS. V.

MINT. *(Mentha.)*

THERE are several sorts of mint growing wild in our fields and woods, some inhabiting a wet and marshy soil, others preferring a dry and open situation. The powerful and refreshing smell of this herb has recommended it to general notice, and we find several species cultivated in gardens for domestic and medicinal uses. Of these the most esteemed is *Spear-mint*, (*Mentha viridis*,) so called on account of the shape of its leaves which are long, and somewhat in the shape of a spear.

This herb is called by M. Valmont Bomare *Menthe d'Angleterre*, (English mint,) and he speaks of it as originally growing in this country only. It is also known in France and Italy respectively by the names *Menthe de notre dame*, (our lady's mint,) and *erba Santa Maria*, (St. Mary's herb,) from what traditionary cause we know not. This particular species must be known to most persons, as being the most useful kind of garden mint, very much employed in spring salads, as well as in sauce for roasted lamb, &c. Its carminative qualities render it a wholesome ingredient in pea soup, and very proper to be boiled with green peas. It is recommended as one of the most efficacious simples, in cases of loss of appetite, nausea, &c., and in the colic pains to which children are subject. For these purposes an infusion of the dried herb is better than the green, as containing the whole virtues of the mint. The juice of spear-mint drunk in vinegar is said to be an effectual cure for hiccups.

The next in value among the different species of mint, (of which there are not fewer than twelve indigenous to Britain,) is PEPPERMINT, (*Mentha piperita*,) much cultivated for medical use, especially in the county of Surry, whence the London market is supplied. It has a smooth purple stalk, and is easily to be distinguished from other kinds of mint by its penetrating smell, and more pungent taste, leaving a peculiar sense of coldness on the tongue. The leaves stand in pairs upon footstalks, and are of a dark green colour, oval-shaped, nerved, and pointed: the flowers are small, and of a purple colour, and appear in August and September.

From this herb, either in its fresh or dry state, a pungent oil is obtained, by distillation with water, called oil of peppermint. This oil is a favourite remedy in spasmodic cases, and has been recommended as a stimulant in Asiatic cholera. *Spirit of peppermint* is formed by adding three drachms of this oil and one pint of water to a gallon of proof spirit, and with a gentle fire allowing one gallon to distil. *Peppermint water*, when well prepared, is found to be an excellent cordial in common cases of spasm and flatulency, and is also of use to cover the nauseous taste, and diminish the painful action of saline and other medicines. The method of its preparation is as follows. Take two pounds of the herb in its dried state, or if fresh, take four pounds; add seven fluid ounces of proof spirit, and two gallons of water, and let one gallon distil. Instead of the herb itself, two drachms of oil of peppermint may be substituted. *Peppermint drops* are a convenient form of oil of peppermint, and may very easily be made by warming four ounces of powdered white sugar over a charcoal fire, and adding twenty-four drops of oil of peppermint and half a fluid ounce of peppermint water. These rapidly stirred together, and dropped on polished marble, soon harden, and may be dried by a slow heat.

PENNYROYAL, (*Mentha pulegium*,) was the favourite mint of the ancients. Pliny recounts to us the